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African-Americans and South Carolina Today

As a result of the civil rights revolution, African-American citizens have a much better chance to play a variety of roles in life. While barriers still exist, the door of opportunity is open wider than ever before. People once had to spend all their energy merely enduring or fighting for rights. After they pushed the door open a little, many rushed through. Some are still working to open the door completely.

Many others have turned their skills and talents in other directions. They are building upon the work of the pioneers you met in this book. They blazed trails in many directions: politics and government service, education, business, science, sports, media and the arts, and religion.

Politics and Government Service

Today, African-Americans from South Carolina are making contributions in politics and government service at all levels. You can find Carolinians in international, national, state, and local government.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson is one of South Carolina's most famous political sons. Although he has never been active in South Carolina politics, he is known around the world. While Jackson is controversial because he is so outspoken, many people admire him for his eloquent and moving speeches, including some of those who disagree with him. He speaks for poor people of all races and all nations. When he ran for the presidency of our nation, he tried to build what he called a "rainbow coalition." By "rainbow" he meant people of all colors and all creeds. When Jackson spoke to the Democratic National Convention in 1988, he talked about America being like a quilt. A quilt is made of many different patches and patterns. Each one is different and unique and each one adds to the beauty of the whole. So we are as a nation. Those are ideas expressed in a way that nearly all Americans can understand and enjoy whether or not they agree with Jackson on other things.

Jesse Jackson began his rise to international fame in Greenville, where he was born in 1941. He bears the hurt of the segregated society that South Carolina was in that day. He remembers having to walk right past a white school to reach the all-black school six miles away. He remembers as an eight-year-old boy whistling at a store owner. The owner pulled a gun on him, cursed him, and warned him never to whistle at a white man again. He was born out of wedlock, and the other kids teased him, saying that "he was nothing but a nobody because he didn't have no daddy." He has spent the rest of his life proving that he is indeed somebody. He has made millions of others feel that they, too, could become "somebodies," regardless of how society treated them.

Jackson started learning leadership and speaking skills in school and church. His skills improved with practice. He was also a very talented football player—a star quarterback. Despite his talent, he did not let sports come in the way of education. One of his teachers remembers that he was different from a lot of athletes. He asked for his assignments ahead of time if he knew he was going to miss class because of sports. Jackson was so good in football that the University of Illinois offered him an athletic scholarship. He accepted the offer. Then they told him that they only allowed whites to play quarterback. He left and went to North Carolina A&T University, a school with all African-American students. There he could play any position he had the skill to win.

This was the early 1960s. He became involved in civil rights demonstrations. He led sit-ins at theaters and lunch counters in Greensboro, N.C., where

U.S. Representative Jim Clyburn, the state's first African-American congress person since the turn of the century. Photo by Scott Webster.

he was in college. He met other civil rights leaders and eventually began working with Martin Luther King, Jr. Along the way, he went to the Chicago Theological Seminary, earning a degree to become a minister. Following the murder of King in 1968, he began his rise to become the most well-known civil rights leader among African-Americans.

In 1973, Jackson returned to Greenville. After winning international fame, citizens of Greenville welcomed him home as a hero. They gave him a great dinner at the hotel in which he had once worked as a waiter. They honored him in a dining room that once would not have served him dinner. What he told the people at that dinner is the same message he has been preaching all over the world: "I was raised and born in the ghetto, but I am a child of the universe. War anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere" (Barbara A. Reynolds, *Jesse Jackson: The Man, The Movement, The Myth.* Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1975, p. 44.).

When Bill Clinton took office as President of the United States in January of 1993, African-Americans from South Carolina helped mold the direction of the new government. The Clinton Administration offered Marion Wright Edelman a position. She turned it down, preferring to influence Clinton from the outside. She is head of an organization called the Children's Defense Fund.

Like Jesse Jackson, Marion Wright first became interested in politics during the civil rights movement. Childhood memories of the segregated South in the 1950s deeply affected her. She remembers an auto wreck in front of her house. The ambulance only took the white victim, who was not badly hurt. It left behind the badly injured black family. Yet she still loves the South. She remembers that both her parents' families left the South for better opportunities in the North. Her father, a minister, returned to South Carolina to preach in a small church in Bennettsville. She feels she learned more about feelings of the heart by living in a small southern town.

She has spent her life giving of her heart to others. She earned a law degree so that she could help African-Americans in Mississippi fight legal barriers to voting. She showed U.S. Senators the poverty of families living in the deep South. Children whose stomachs were swollen with hunger deeply moved the senators. One of those senators was Bobby Kennedy. She later married one of his aides and took the name Marion Wright Edelman. Shortly after that

she founded the Children's Defense Fund. The group has fought for all kinds of programs like Head Start and health care to help children of all races.

Edelman became a close friend of Hillary Rodham Clinton, who later was chair of the Children's Defense Fund. With Bill and Hillary in the White House, Marion Wright Edelman now has an inside voice in national politics. In a way, Edelman is the child of Mary McLeod Bethune, whom you met earlier in this book. If you remember, Bethune was a friend of another president's wife, Eleanor Roosevelt.

In 1992, James Clyburn became the first African-American to win a seat to Congress from South Carolina since the 1800s. He has proved that racial barriers in voting are beginning to crack. Although he was elected from a newly-created district that had a majority of African-American voters, he also won many white votes. Clyburn openly appealed to voters of both races. To be an effective leader for the sixth district, Clyburn felt that he needed white support. Even his white Republican opponent agreed that Clyburn's election was in some ways positive, saying that the state would be better off when blacks winning elections would not be considered unusual.

For most of the 1900s, African-Americans in South Carolina could not sit on juries or serve as judges. As a result the legal system did not always treat them fairly. Today, African-Americans do far more than just sit on juries. They help make the law and also interpret the law as judges. In 1985, Ernest Finney became the first African-American on the S.C. Supreme Court since 1877. In that year, Judge Jonathan Jasper Wright resigned from the Court. Wright knew that the whites who had regained control of state government would force him off the Court.

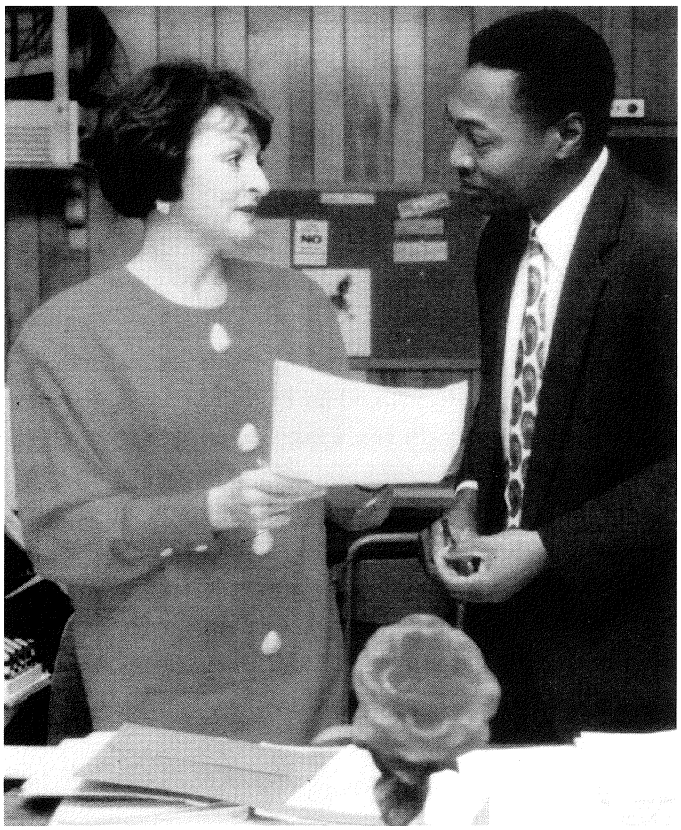
Finney is not a native South Carolinian. When he was fourteen-years-old in 1946, he moved to the state when his father took a job as a dean at Claflin College. His father insisted that he train as a teacher even though he did not want to teach. He wanted to be a lawyer. He worked hard and earned degrees in both areas. As a teacher, Finney earned very little. To make a little extra money, he worked as a waiter for meetings of the all-white S.C. Bar Association in Myrtle Beach. In the 1990s, lawyers of both races argue cases that Finney helps decide as judge.

Many African-Americans work as professionals in government service. The state boasts two nationally known police chiefs. Charles Austin is police chief in Columbia. Austin is relatively new in his role. However, he is quickly building a reputation as a man who searches for new ideas and tries them out. Reuben Greenberg has been chief in Charleston a little longer. He is a most unusual man. A former college professor, he is a member of two minority groups. He is both African-American and Jewish. This police chief is very tough on crime. His book, *Let's Take Back Our Streets,* reveals his ideas. He wants citizens and police to drive criminals off the streets and keep them off. While this idea could lead to police brutality, Greenberg has been careful to make sure that his officers follow correct procedures. Sometimes, he puts on roller skates to check out what is happening on the streets. The head of the International Association of Police Chiefs says that every city needs a chief as good as Greenberg.

Education

The list of important African-Americans in the field of education is long. Here is a short sample of some of those who have been and are working to improve our knowledge and education in both the state and the nation. They represent nearly 7,000 African-Americans who are teaching in South Carolina's public schools. African-American teachers make up more than eighteen percent of all the teachers in the state.

In Aiken County, Dr. Frank Roberson is the school system's top administrator over instruction. Like many Southern African-Americans, Roberson left the South after finishing his basic education. Like many other Southerners of all racial backgrounds, he felt strong ties to his family roots and to the land. After he earned enough money in New York to complete his education, he came back to South Carolina. He began teaching and earned advanced degrees. Moving into administration, he became the Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services. In the early 1980s, he and his wife built their own house with their own hands on land that his grandfather once owned. As Roberson works to improve the education of all the children in Aiken County Schools, his family is



Dr. Frank Roberson, giving instructions to an aide in the public school system in Aiken County. He is only one of thousands of African-Americans who today play a vital role in preparing the children of South Carolina for the challenges of the future. Photo by Ginny Southworth. Courtesy of The Aiken Standard.

growing even deeper roots in the state. Roberson is representative not only of all those unsung heroes of the classroom, but also of the many African-Americans who help run South Carolina schools in important administrative positions.

Dr. Thomas Elliott Kerns became the first African-American superintendent of the Greenville County Schools. The district has the largest number of students of any in the state. In 1991, he was recognized as one of the top eight school administrators in the entire nation. Kerns is no longer unique. By late 1993, twelve percent of South Carolina's school superintendents (eleven individuals) were African-American.

In the area of higher education, African-Americans are active and prominent in and out of South Carolina. Dr. Augustus Rogers organizes a yearly conference at the University of South Carolina (USC) that presents research on the black family. He has built a national reputation in this important area. Dr. Grace McFadden teaches African-American studies classes at USC. She is famous for her work in oral history. She and her assistants videotape interviews with prominent people so that future generations cannot only read their words, but hear and see them. Dr. Ed Hayes works in the state Criminal Justice Academy in Columbia. Dr. Ricky Hill is chairperson of the Political Science Department at S.C. State University. He often explains political events in interviews with news reporters.

Dr. Theresa Singleton, a native of Charleston, is one of only a few African-American female archaeologists in the nation. After teaching and working at the State Museum, she became curator for historical archaeology at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. She has been a pioneer in uncovering the story of the daily life of African-Americans who were brought to America.

Dr. Sara Dunlop Jackson was born in Columbia. Working at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., she has taught scholars how to do research. Many historians give her credit for teaching them how to track down the important tidbits of information they needed in their work.

Business

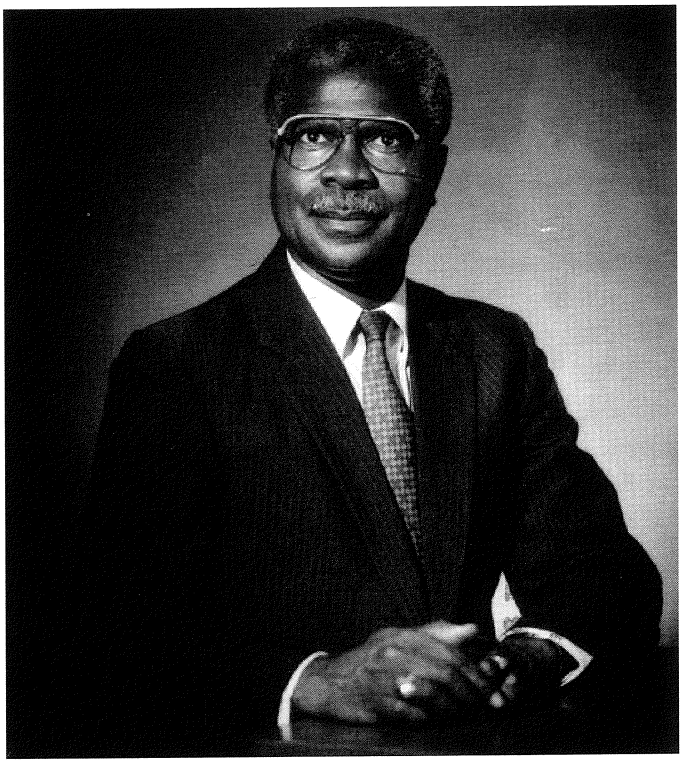
The danger in talking about important African-American business leaders today is that we must leave important people out. You do not have to look very far to see how much African-Americans contribute to the state and the national economy in business activities.

W. Melvin Brown is perhaps one of the best examples. Brown is the chief operating officer, or CEO, of a North Charleston company, the American Development Corporation. His company provides jobs for 350 people. It makes equipment for the military. Much of his equipment helped America win the war with Iraq in the Persian Gulf in 1991. Brown's company is among the 100 largest private firms in South

Carolina, and it is the thirty-third largest African-American owned company in the entire nation. CEO Brown has a great deal to do in running a company that makes about $35 million each year. All these responsibilities do not keep him from volunteering his time. Brown is on the board of trustees for several colleges, including Clemson, and chaired the Election Commission in Charleston. In 1993, he became the first African-American to be inducted into the South Carolina Business Hall of Fame. In a year when over 200 people were nominated, Brown was one of only four people to win the honor.

South Carolina has another African-American business that is among the nation's best. The DeCosta family contracting business has a long history in the state. It dates back through three generations to the 1890s. Herbert A. DeCosta, Jr. brought it national fame in the 1970s. In the 1930s, DeCosta worked as a carpenter, learning the family business from the ground up. In 1940, he graduated from the Avery Institute in his hometown of Charleston. After earning degree in architectural engineering at Iowa State, he went to work for NASA. Later he returned home to run the construction business. His greatest talent is in the restoration of old buildings. Among the buildings he has restored are St. Stephens and St. Mark's churches in Charleston and Claflin College's Tingley Hall. In recent years, DeCosta turned to help his community. He has won awards in volunteer work for helping such groups as the Boy Scouts, the Spoleto Festival, and the Penn Community Center.

In 1993, Mr. W. Melvin Brown became the first African-American inducted into the S.C. Business Hall of Fame. His company, the American Development Corporation, is one of the top African-American owned businesses in the state. Courtesy of Melvin Brown.



Science

Edwin R. Russell was a key figure in the nuclear age that began with development of the atomic bomb. Russell was born in Columbia more than eighty years ago. His interest in science led him to study chemistry at Benedict College. He received a B.A. from Benedict and a master's degree from Howard University. In the chapter on the military, you learned that he left a job in Washington, D.C. when the Army refused to accept his African-American students into the new chemical warfare service as officers. He returned to South Carolina, but before long he was offered a job at the University of Chicago. Russell went to Chicago where he worked on production of the atomic bomb. In 1942, he was one of two African-American scientists involved in the first experiments with nuclear weapons. Russell was one of twenty-seven people who received a citation from President Franklin D. Roosevelt for his work. He still has the silver lapel pin he received. The War Manpower Commission also awarded him for his work.

After the war, Russell returned to South Carolina and worked with the Atomic Energy Commission at the Savannah River Plant for more than twenty-one years. His work there focused on how to purify nuclear materials and how to remove ingested materials from the human body. The peaceful use of nuclear materials was one of his concerns. Russell retired to Columbia, to the same street where he had lived during his youth. After his retirement, he tried to help others through his work in the construction field.

Charles Bolden is one of the most well-known South Carolinians in the field of science. Bolden was born in Columbia in 1946. Ironically, in 1984, years after the University of South Carolina refused to admit him because of his race, the school honored him

Charles Bolden, one of South Carolina's two African-American astronauts. Courtesy of NASA.

with an honorary degree. Perhaps by refusing him they did him a favor. Instead of USC, he went to the U.S. Naval Academy. After winning honors as a student, he joined the Marines and became a pilot. He won military honors for flying more than 100 combat missions in Vietnam. Bolden has a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering and a master of science in systems management. In 1979, he completed the Naval Test Pilot School. In 1980, he survived the rigorous selection process to become an astronaut. Bolden was pilot on two space shuttle flights and commander on a third flight, logging nearly 500 hours in space. Bolden was so successful in his work at NASA that in 1992 the government asked him to develop a new mission for the entire space agency. Where we go in space in the years to come may be decided by a brilliant and talented man from South Carolina. Over his career, three schools have awarded him honorary doctorates.

Bolden flew the last shuttle mission before the Challenger disaster in 1986. Unhappily, one of his best friends was killed when the Challenger exploded on take off. That was Ron McNair of Lake City, South Carolina. Son of an auto mechanic, McNair also had to overcome many obstacles in becoming an astronaut. He was valedictorian of his high school class, lettered in three sports, and played the saxophone in a school jazz band. After graduating with honors from North Carolina A&T University, he earned a doctorate in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Known for his expertise in laser technology, he beat out 1,000 other applicants to join the space shuttle program in 1978. He flew in one successful mission aboard the Challenger in 1984. Like other African-American heroes from South Carolina, McNair made the greatest sacrifice one can make in serving his nation. He gave his life. His memory and inspiration lives on in the students of the Ronald E. McNair Junior High School in his home town of Lake City.

South Carolina African-Americans are not only exploring space, but they have also won fame in exploring the inner body. Dr. Edward Sawyer Cooper, another Columbia native, was elected president of the American Heart Association in 1992. At the age of seventy, this honor was the capstone of a long and distinguished career. His research includes not only heart diseases but also strokes. In Philadelphia, he founded a research center for strokes. Public education about how to prevent these deadly diseases was another of his concerns. His work has improved your chance for a longer and healthier life.

Sports

South Carolina has certainly produced its share of star athletes. Among them are many African-Americans. We would like to introduce you to just a few of them.

One of the most remarkable young men to come from the Palmetto State in recent years and to win national fame as an athlete could also be considered a poet or humanitarian. Alex English was named after Alexander the Great. He lived up to the name. A native of Columbia, he was so good in basketball that over 100 schools recruited him. He chose to stay home and play for University of South Carolina. After setting the all-time school scoring record, he graduated in 1976 with a degree in English. Few NBA players have ever been better. He was the leading scorer in

1983. He has played in several all-star games. All of that was his basketball side. His other sides are just as impressive. He wrote three books of poetry. He tells how important writing is to him in his autobiography, which is titled *The English Language.* He has been an actor in movies and on television. Alex English cares about people both here and around the rest of the world. He has raised over $100,000 to feed the hungry children of Africa.

In 1970, a South Carolinian became the world champion in heavyweight boxing. In what some regard as one of the best fights of all times, "Smokin' " Joe Frazier beat Muhammad Ali when Ali was at his peak. Frazier had first won fame in 1964. He was the first American to win an Olympic gold medal in heavyweight boxing. Frazier used his fame and fortune to help others. He has helped many charities. One of his many projects was a "Father's Day Picnic for Homeless Children." A native of Beaufort County, the state legislature invited Frazier to speak after his victory over Ali. If you remember, this was the time when the state was just beginning to really end segregation and when tension was high. Frazier told the all-white legislature that we need to get closer together and work together and make the state a better place. The legislators gave him a standing ovation.

South Carolina can be very proud to claim one of the greatest female athletes of all time as a native daughter. Born in the little town of Silver, South Carolina, in 1927, Althea Gibson grew up in Harlem, New York. Her father taught her to be tough and competitive by giving her personal boxing lessons. She grew

Today there are many African-American athletes from S.C. who have made their mark competing against people of all races and all nations. Prior to desegregation, African-Americans were limited to compete against only those of their own race, such as this Columbia professional baseball team, shown around 1946. Reproduced f om Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, *slide G-6 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library.*

tall and strong. She soon became one of the best athletes in her neighborhood. A local musician encouraged her to try tennis and arranged lessons for her. Two doctors from the South saw her play in a tournament and offered to help. She went to live in Wilmington, North Carolina, where she worked on her tennis. In addition, she played in the band, was captain of the basketball team, and often played football and baseball with the boys at school. After winning a college scholarship, she began winning professional tennis tournaments. She was the first African-American to play in and win the U.S. Open title and the first to win the Wimbledon title. In the late 1950s, she was the best woman tennis player in the world. After retiring from tennis, she changed sports and became a very successful pro golfer. Her reputation for power in tennis carried over. She was known as one of the longest drivers on the pro golf tour. In 1983, the S.C. Athletic Hall of Fame inducted her as a member.

Breaking into the ranks of coaching has been difficult for African-American athletes. While colleges and professional sports organizations were willing to appreciate the playing talents of blacks, they were less willing to place blacks in positions of authority. This has been especially true at the professional level. The first African-American National Football League coach was named in 1989. He was Art Shell, a native of North Charleston. Shell had already proven his worth as a player, as have other South Carolinians. Charlie Brown of Charleston was a star receiver with the Washington Redskins and the Atlanta Falcons. The Perry brothers of Aiken (William, "the refrigerator" and Michael Dean) both earned all-pro honors as defensive linemen. Barney Chavous, also of Aiken, played as a defensive end for the Denver Broncos.

However, Art Shell was exceptional. He made the Pro Bowl seven times in a row, played in two Super Bowls, and was taken into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Within a year as a coach, he turned the losing Raiders into a playoff team. Regardless of how the rest of his coaching career goes, he proved that great men, whatever their race, can make great coaches.

Charlayne Hunter-Gault, famous television news journalist on public television. Courtesy of SCETV.

Media and the Arts

African-Americans from South Carolina are making contributions in the media and the arts that touch people all over the world. You met quite a few of these people in earlier chapters. Here are a few more. You can see some of them on television each day. You can find their work in your library. They are an important part of our culture. They help us understand it. They make it richer. They preserve it. Remember, these are only a few who represent many, many more.

Charlayne Hunter-Gault was born in the small South Carolina town of Due West in 1942. She did not live there long before she moved out of the state. Yet, despite memories of racial discrimination, she remembers South Carolina in a positive way. Like so many other Southerners, black and white, she feels a sense of place, a sense of belonging here in South Carolina. She went on to shoot for higher goals than even her teachers saw for her. In 1960, Hunter-Gault was one of the first two African-Americans to enter the University of Georgia. After earning a degree in journalism, she worked as a reporter for *The New*

Yorker magazine and *The New York Times* newspaper. Later she moved into broadcast journalism. In recent years she has been one of the anchor reporters on the award-winning MacNeil/Lehrer Report that is seen nightly on public television. If you want to know more about her, you can read about her life in her autobiography, *In My Place.*

Bill Terrell is one of the most visible African-Americans on public television in South Carolina today. Though he moved to South Carolina only in the late 1960s, his work for South Carolina Educational Television will have a lasting impact. Terrell began producing and hosting "Jobman Caravan" in 1968 as a way to help young men find work. By the 1990s, it developed into a popular news magazine type show that won S.C. Educational Television its first Emmy award. Terrell looks at a wide variety of issues that concern African-Americans in the state. As with so many other giving people, he is especially concerned with ideas that will help children succeed in a tough world.

Bill Terrell, producer of the award winning *S.C. Educational Television program "Jobman Caravan." Courtesy of SCETV.*

Poet, writer, television journalist, and talk show host, Listervelt Middleton may be a familiar name to many of you if you watch public television. Born in Pineville in 1952, Middleton earned a degree in political science from Benedict College in 1972. He began his career as a news director for a commercial television station in Columbia. From there he moved to S.C. Educational Television and soon began winning awards as host and producer of the show "For the People." His main concern is helping people understand the rich tradition of African culture. He is helping us to see that Africans have affected the entire world. Three of his books of poetry are read all over the world. He is also a performing poet who has given readings of his work in major cities across the nation. The poetry reflects his roots both here and in Africa. He wants us to remember the past, but he also asks us to face the challenges of today and tomorrow.

You have already met many South Carolinians who have made the state famous the world over in the field of music. African-Americans from South Carolina helped create jazz and the popular music we hear on the radio. The tradition of gospel singing that is so strong in the state continues into the 1990s. Gospel carries over into more formal kinds of singing. Myrtle Hall Smith, born in Greenville, is known the world over as a lyric soprano singer. She first won fame as a soloist with the Billy Graham Crusade. Since then she has sung in formal concerts as well as in religious services as far away as China, Australia, and South Africa.

Religion

African-American ministers have played a central role in the history of South Carolina and in the history of civil rights. In part, this is due to the central importance of religion in African-American life. A second reason is the limited number of opportunities educated African-Americans had in other professions. Finally, you will recall that the church was about the only place where large numbers of blacks could gather without alarming the white community.

Today, the civil rights movement has moved beyond the bounds of the church. As you see from this

chapter, more and more African-Americans have moved into other leadership roles. This does not mean, however, that African-American ministers no longer play leadership roles. Many still do.

Some ministers of churches with African-American members continue to serve as leaders in local chapters of the NAACP. Others, such as the Reverend Ben Snoddy of Spartanburg, are asking whether churches should change themselves as well as change society. Reverend Snoddy sees all races interacting in most areas of life in South Carolina today. On the other hand, he echoes Martin Luther King, Jr., in observing that Sunday morning is the most segregated morning of the week. Reverend Snoddy is working to change that. He brought together ministers from several white churches in order to reduce conflict between the races. He helped organize discussion groups of members from black and white churches. He hopes that this and other cooperative projects like day care centers will some day lead to integrated churches.

Listing all the individuals who have contributed to South Carolina is nearly impossible. However, these people deserve to be recognized. In 1989, the United Black Fund, working with Benedict College, began planning to recognize some of these people and their accomplishments. The United Black Fund raises money to help organizations in the African-American community, such as community centers and programs for students from rural areas. The Committee of 100 Black Men, which raises money for the United Black Fund, established the S.C. Black Hall of Fame. Persons both living and dead who have helped other African-Americans and contributed to the state and the nation are honored each year at the organization's banquet. Honorees are selected from a list of several hundred persons. Many persons outside the organization, including religious and community leaders, have suggested names. The Black Hall of Fame holds photographs and materials on the persons who are inducted. Eventually, they hope to find a permanent home for all of these materials.

In 1991 the Black Hall of Fame inducted the first group of thirty. The group included many people you have met elsewhere in this book, such as astronauts Ronald McNair and Charles Bolden, Jr., and others who are less well-known. Each year, the Black Hall of Fame honors a group of people who have made the world a little better place.

Changing Lifestyles

For many average African-American families in South Carolina, life has changed a great deal in the last twenty-five years. Change has been a long time coming. After the Civil War, seventy-five years of hard work were needed to build enough wealth and power to begin challenging segregation. Breaking down these barriers took another twenty-five years. Many African-Americans still live in poverty, just as many white South Carolinians live in poverty. In the last quarter century more and more families have entered the middle class. What does this mean in daily life?

Fewer families live on farms. Those that do often farm part-time. Most of their income comes from work in town and cities around the state. At the same time, family ties are still important. Many choose to live in family groupings and commute to work rather than move.

We can see this in the little community of Promised Land. If you remember, Promised Land was the little town created by African-Americans just after the Civil War. Once they owned the land, they created a close-knit community that lasted. Change has touched Promised Land. Once the people lived by farming. Now most people have just small fields or gardens in which to grow a few things to eat. Stands of pine trees grow in many of the old fields. The trees will eventually be sold as pulpwood for paper. Small housing developments now cover other fields. People who had left returned. They did not need as much land because they did not have to farm for a living. Most of the roughly 500 residents work in skilled factory jobs outside the community, work in clerical jobs, are self-employed in small businesses, or just sell their labor.

Other things remain the same in Promised Land. Most important, the community endures as a community. It survived because of the self-reliance and pride of its residents. In 1978, the men of the community created their own fire department. They made their own tanker truck using their own skills. They welded a water tank onto a surplus military truck. Church is still the center of community life. When a family has problems, neighbors help.

Those who left for economic reasons or for better chances in life have kept in touch with their roots. Each August, Promised Land holds a Homecoming Day. Relatives and friends from cities all over the nation return to celebrate and renew their ties. Others, who were sent to Promised Land as youths from cities where they could not find work, revisit the tiny community. They found more than work in Promised Land. They found love and family.

Promised Land represents many other small rural African-American communities all over the state. Some have died as farms were lost and people moved to cities. Some, like Frogmore on St. Helena Island, are fairly well-known. Others, like Promised Land, are not. But they are there.

More families live in urban areas. Of course, this is true for both whites and blacks. Most neighborhoods in towns and cities across the state are still primarily white or black in racial composition. However, more and more people are living together in upper middle class suburbs that are springing up. This is most true among highly trained and paid professionals and businesspersons.

Returning and Rediscovering Roots

One of the most remarkable changes in recent years is that African-Americans are moving back to South Carolina. People who had to leave the state made many contributions to the nation. As you have seen, some left for better chances for education. Others left just to find work, and others for professional opportunities. Although many began leaving in the late 1800s after Reconstruction ended, blacks outnumbered whites in the state until the 1920s. The African-American percentage of the state population fell until the 1970s. Sometime in the 1970s, the trend reversed. The 1980 census showed that during the 1970s more African-Americans came into the state than left. The hard work of generations was beginning to pay off. Conditions had improved enough so that South Carolina was beginning to attract talented people back. Public opinion polls are showing that despite remaining problems, African-Americans in the South see race relations as better than in the North.

David Floyd returned to Charleston, the city of his birth, from Washington, D.C. in 1978. He felt he had more opportunity in Charleston. As an administrator in the public schools, he is working to create more opportunities for others. He is providing them with reasons to stay.

Cecilia Trottie left Columbia in 1936 after she graduated from Booker T. Washington High School. She was a teacher in New York for forty years. She came home in 1984. She lives in the very house in which she grew up. Though she has many friends in New York, she came back to Columbia because it was home. It had always been home.

Between World War I and World War II, Balus Glover left family and friends in Promised Land to find work in the North. He was part of the "great migration" that took place back then. He worked for railroads for many years but always kept his ties to home. In 1974, he returned to the land of his youth. He had always said he would return. In his retirement, he has come back to the land. He grows the things he likes to eat on that land, land that African-Americans have owned and farmed since the 1870s. He is content.

Sherman Anderson left South Carolina twice. As one of eleven children of a landless Laurens County family, Anderson's parents had to work hard just to feed their family. They moved to Philadelphia trying to find more opportunity. The family moved back to South Carolina in the 1960s, and Anderson became one of the first African-Americans to go to Irmo High School in Lexington County. Anderson again left the state, this time on his own. He sought higher education, attending Morehouse College in Atlanta and law school at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, where he won several awards as a student. After law school, he worked in the mid-West, but in 1991 he chose to return to Irmo. Since returning, he has directed the Educational Opportunity Center at USC, which helps adults improve educational skills, begun a consulting firm, and won election to the school board for District Five of Richland and Lexington counties.

Verne Dooley's family had lived in the North for generations. Although he thought his only Southern roots were the roots of enslavement, he found other roots when he moved to Columbia in the late 1980s. Because South Carolina is recognizing the contributions of African culture to the state, Dooley found new roots—much more positive roots. He also found that

he and his family were welcome to live in any neighborhood they wanted. As a high ranking computer corporation executive, Dooley has been active in the community. He is contributing to an even richer culture by promoting the arts, raising funds for the United Way, helping train new community leaders, and giving his time to schools.

In this chapter we have looked at the people who live all around us. Some of them you knew because you see their names in the news. Others you did not know because they are not famous. Even though they are not famous, they are important. They are making South Carolina and the nation a better place for all of us. We cannot possibly talk about all of them. For every one that we have named, countless others exist. Some of those we have left out may be your parents, their friends, your neighbors down the street, or someone who lives nearby.

This closing thought suggests a good project for your class. Identify African-Americans who are doing important things in your community. Invite them to visit your class. Have them tell you about their lives. Ask them their feelings about their cultural and ethnic roots. Then you may want to expand and invite people with other cultural roots. The more we know about each other, the better we will get along in the future.